Tom Gaskins
30 January 2004

Quarterly Technical Manager's Report of Learning Technologies Project Status

For Q1 of FY2004 (October – December, 2004)

General

As of the end of the quarter all four phase two LT projects have agreed-upon deliverables, plans and schedules, all of which are documented in the individual project data sheets (http://learn.arc.nasa.gov/pds/index.html). The phase 1 deliverables of three of the projects are also now available to the public for web download at the same address above. The four project teams are working diligently against their deliverables and schedules, although lack of funding distribution is hampering the progress of the Animated Earth project (see below). Two of the project teams have begun consulting with Virtual Design Center for educational-technology training.

Only one of the projects had deliverables due in the Q1 period – aside from determination of the phase 2 plans and schedule – therefore there is deliverable assessment below of only that one project (Virtual Lab).

Animated Earth

This project continues to struggle with the LT funding problems, electing to work primarily on projects actually funded by entities other than Learning Technologies. While the project manager says they are not technically behind, it appears that full-time effort is not yet being applied. If so, this will prove to be a significant set-back for the project.

Information Accessibility

The project is progressing well, with significant new engineering and with lively contact between the project team and internal and external organizations such as the National Federation for the Blind and the Virginia Space Grant Consortium, among others. The team expect to meet its Q2 deliverables, and is currently not expressing any problems.

Virtual Laboratory

The project had a 12/15 deliverable to determine the number of instruments and specimens that would be implemented in phase 2. This determination is proving difficult on this schedule, however, and the project asked that it be given more time in order to create and disseminate an RFP. The project manager's plan is to identify the instruments that can be created with existing outside expertise, in favor of determining the instruments independently and then soliciting proposals to build them. Negotiations with Beckman Institute at the University of Illinois have begun to produce additional specimens for the virtual electron scanning microscope.

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What's The Difference?

The plan and deliverables for this project have proven difficult to develop. As of the end of the quarter, the project manager and the LT staff had agreed on most of the deliverables and schedule, but some details remained to be negotiated and finalized. (This negotiation and agreement subsequently occurred in early January 2004.) Nevertheless, the project team has continued to work despite the uncertainty and is producing an updated and more complete version of its Solar System Explorer application for public dissemination in Q2, which is one of its formal Q2 deliverables.